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(54) **ARMORED AIR SPRING ASSEMBLY**
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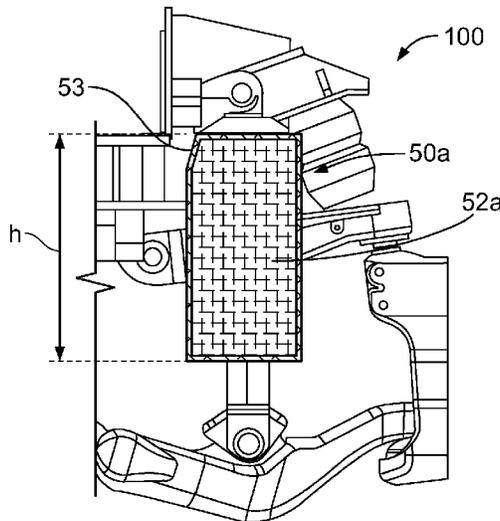
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B60G 15/12 (2006.01)
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(57) **ABSTRACT**
An air spring assembly including a damper that extends into an air cylinder float, the damper including a rod positioned having an end affixed to an end cap of the air cylinder float, a first piston affixed to the rod within the damper, a second piston affixed to the damper and having one or more seals on an outer surface thereof that sealingly engage an inner surface of the air cylinder float, wherein when a load applied to the air spring assembly is increased, the second piston and the second end of the damper move towards the end cap compressing air within the air cylinder float, wherein the air cylinder float is a solid member that does not expand as the air pressure within increases during compression, and wherein a protective membrane is positioned on an outer diameter of the air cylinder float.

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F16F 9/06 (2006.01)
F41H 7/02 (2006.01)
F41H 7/04 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC *F16F 9/06* (2013.01); *F16F 13/002*
(2013.01); *F41H 7/02* (2013.01); *F41H 7/04*
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2202/152 (2013.01); *B60G 2202/314*
(2013.01); *B60G 2204/40* (2013.01)

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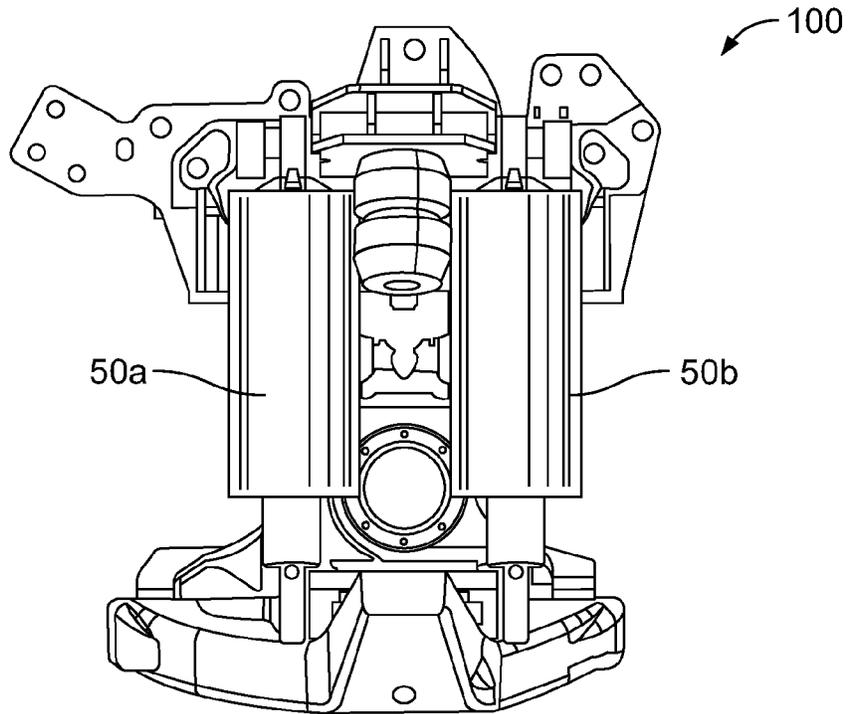


FIG. 1

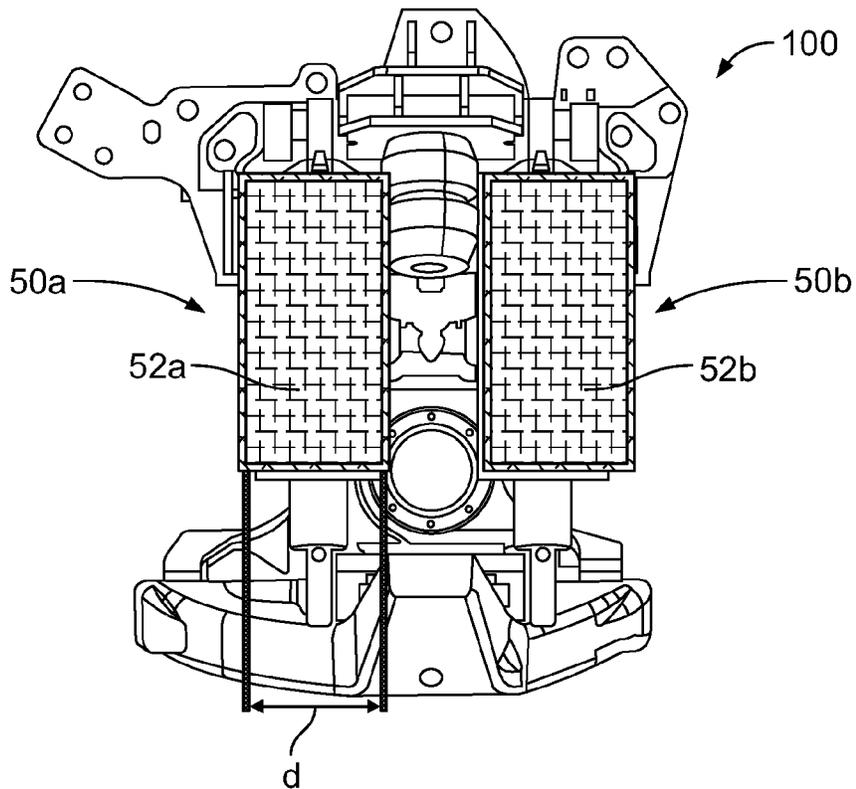


FIG. 2

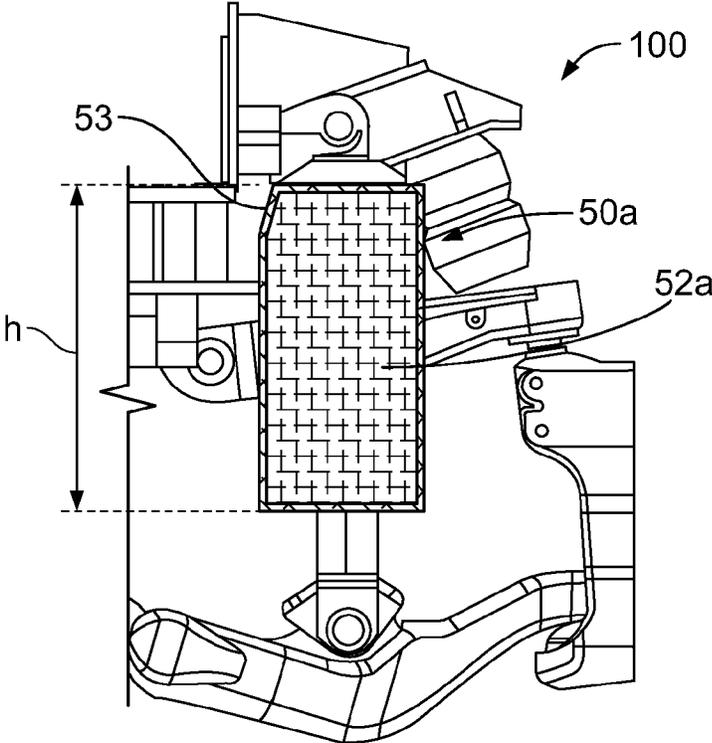


FIG. 3

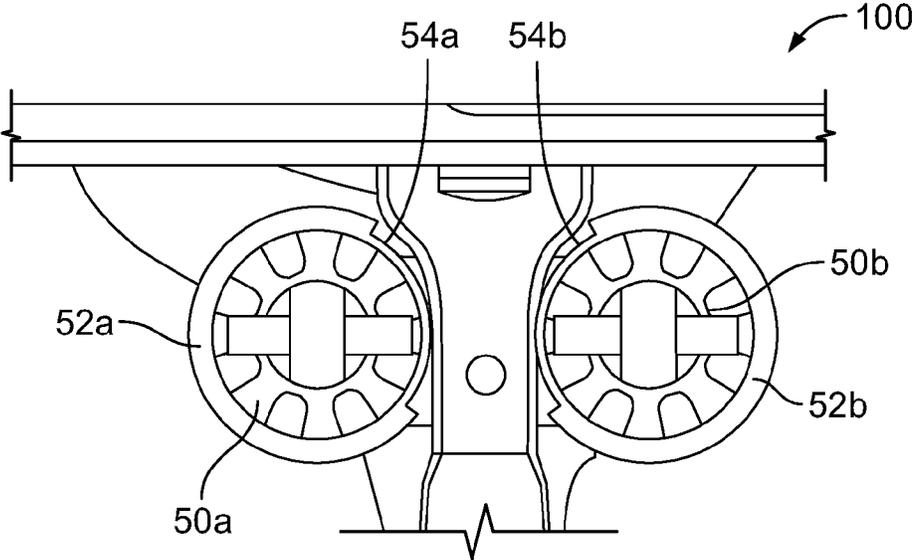


FIG. 4

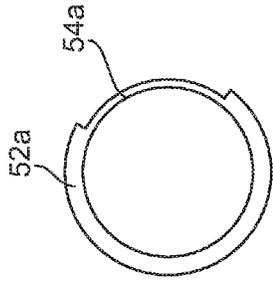


FIG. 5

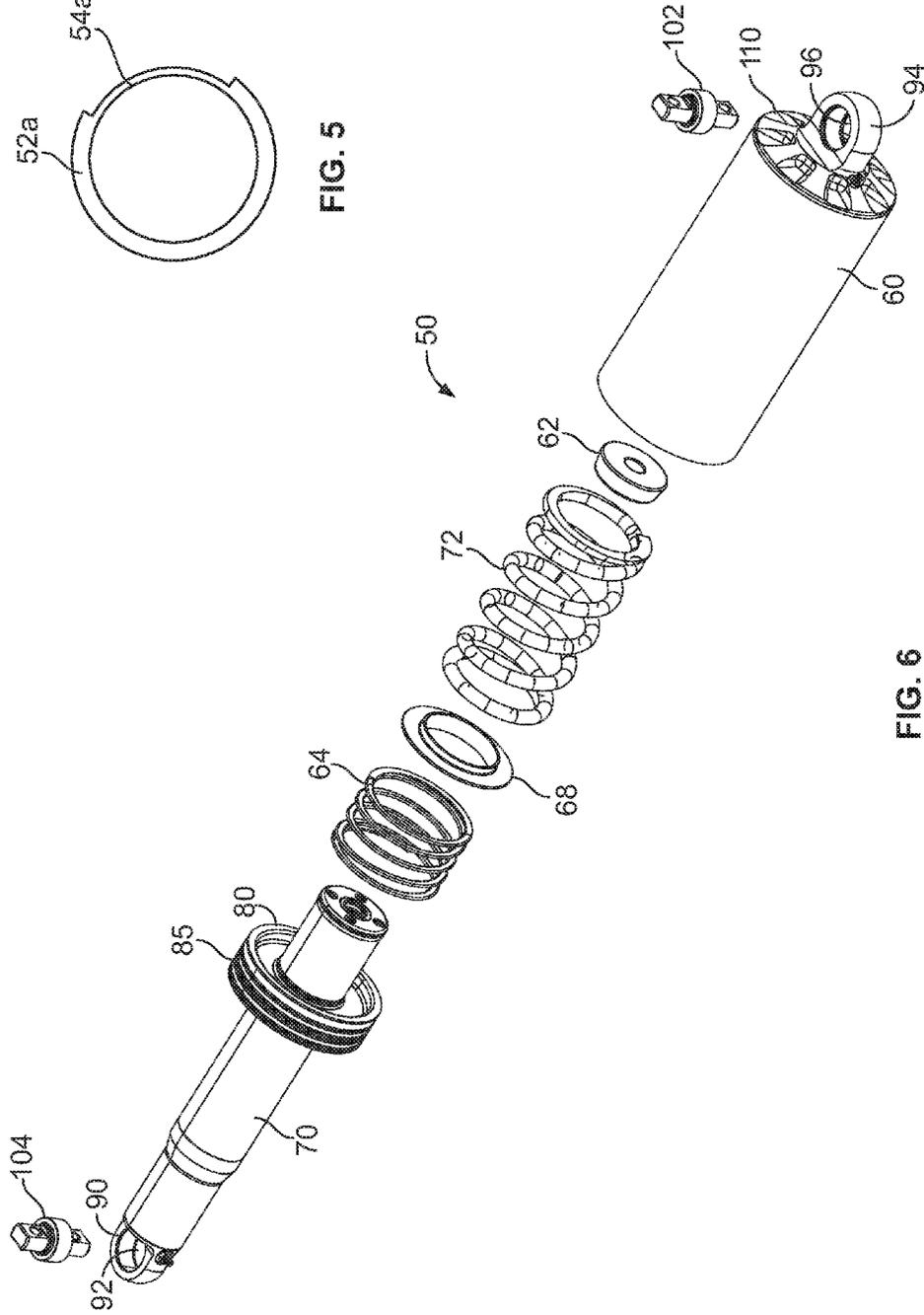


FIG. 6

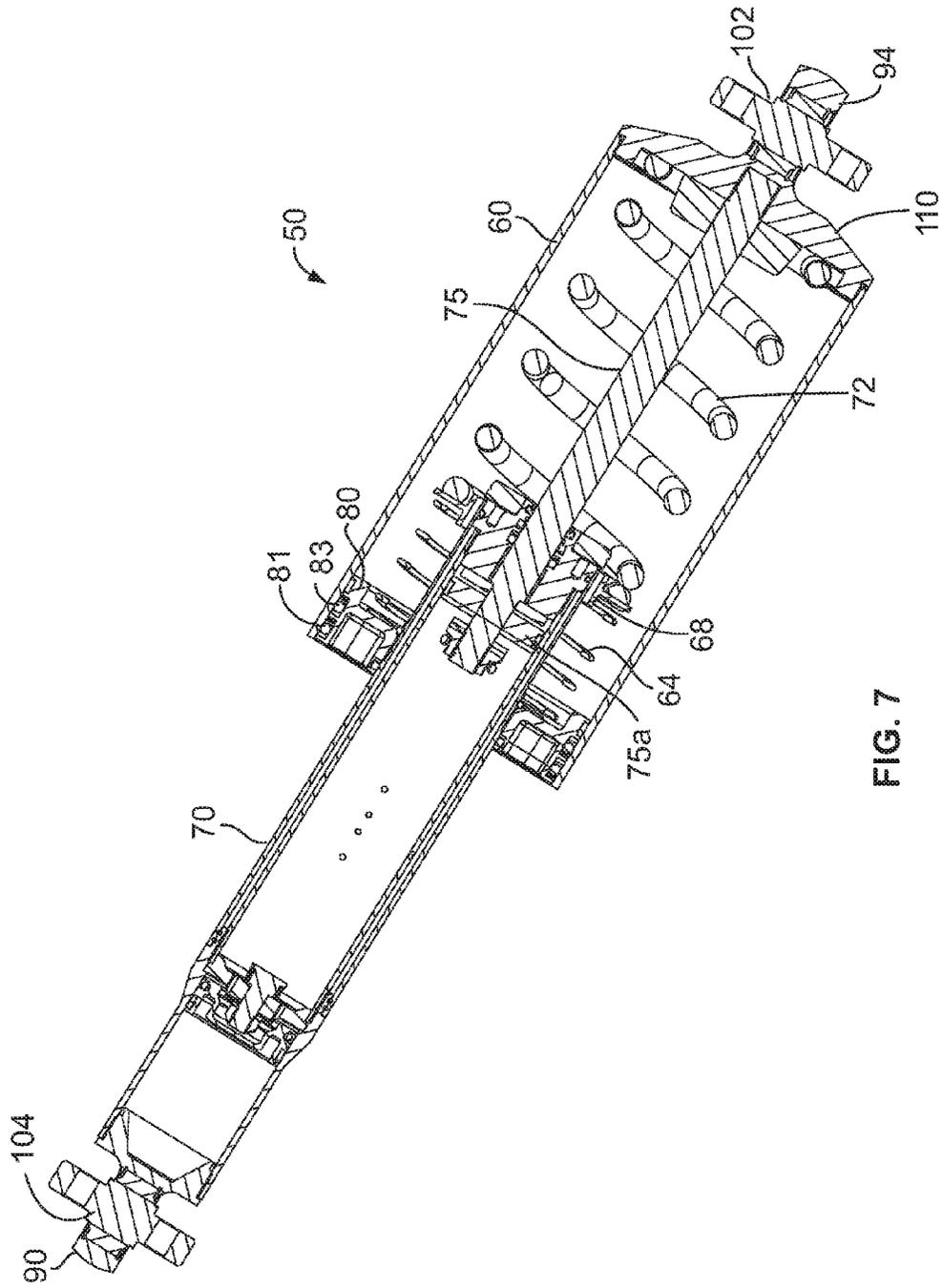


FIG. 7

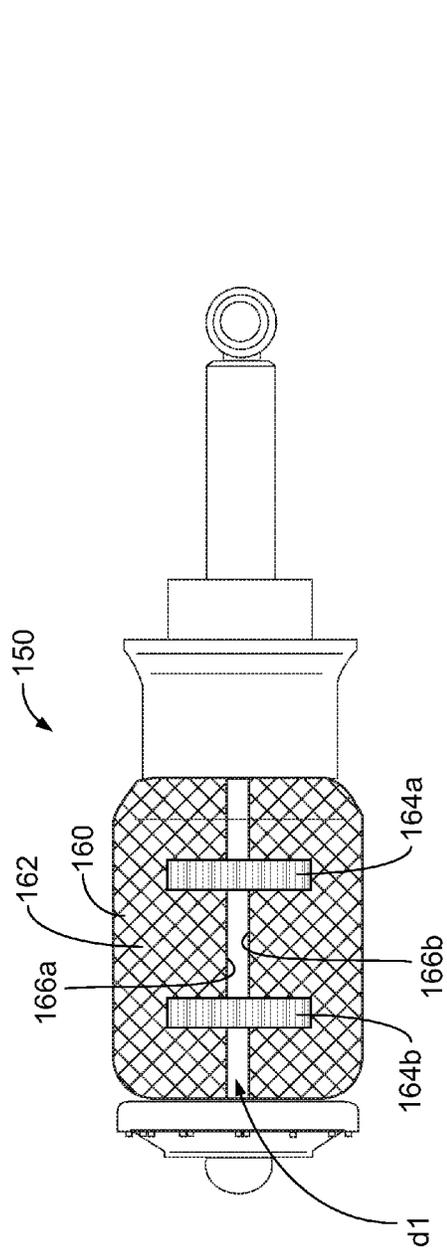


FIG. 8

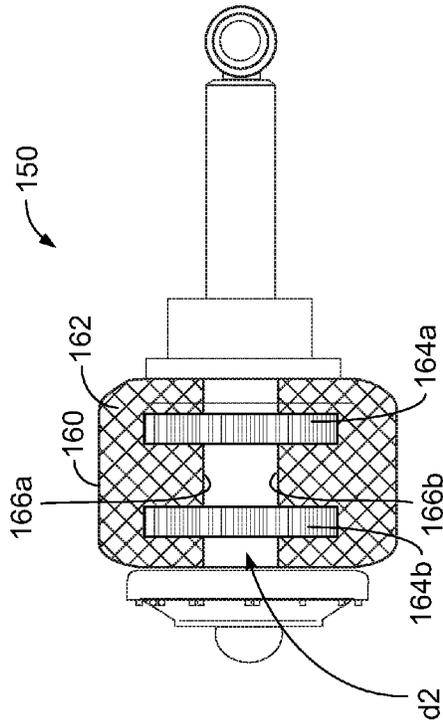


FIG. 9

ARMORED AIR SPRING ASSEMBLY

BACKGROUND

The present invention generally relates to vehicle suspen- 5
 sions. More particularly, the present invention relates to
 vehicle air suspension systems that include an armored
 pneumatic spring, or air spring useful for protecting the air
 spring from small arms fire, shrapnel from explosions and
 other debris. The pneumatic suspension may include an air
 strut assembly comprising an air cylinder and damper, which
 may be referred to as air spring assembly or strut assembly.
 Prior strut assemblies have included a flexible air spring
 made of rubber wherein the air spring includes a flexible
 rubber membrane that expands as the strut is loaded. Typical
 air springs of this type with a flexible rubber membrane
 provide a relatively low spring rate. As a result, additional
 spring rate and roll stiffness has typically been required to be
 added to the vehicle, e.g., often in the form of an additional,
 independent mechanical coil spring to meet vehicle handling
 and stability objectives. Therefore, when using air springs
 with flexible or expandable membranes, an 'anti-roll bar' or
 'sway bar' has often been utilized as the mechanism to
 achieve the desired auxiliary roll stiffness.

In typical air springs with a flexible membrane, the
 operating pressures that may be utilized are limited because
 of the current limitations on flexible membrane and rubber
 construction. Thus, the typical operating pressure at normal-
 ized ride height is limited to 80-100 psi, up to 120 psi, with
 maximum pressure at full compression at around 200 psi. It
 is known that by increasing the effective spring rate of the
 strut assembly, the vehicle may achieve a higher ride fre-
 quency, and increased roll performance and lateral stability
 performance. In particular, when the effective spring rate of
 the strut at the designed ride height is increased, the need for
 auxiliary anti-roll devices may be eliminated.

In some applications using an air spring with a flexible
 membrane, a coil spring may be added to increase the
 effective spring rate of the strut. However, to achieve a
 desired effective spring rate at the designed ride height, the
 strut may require a larger spring, a larger volume of air (and
 thus a flexible membrane with a larger diameter) or a
 combination of both. In many applications, however, the
 space constraints, or limited footprint available for a strut,
 do not allow for an air spring with a flexible membrane even
 when combined with a coil spring to achieve the desired
 increased effective spring rate at the designed ride height of
 a vehicle because of the increased size of the strut required
 to achieve the desired effective spring rate.

Therefore, in some applications it would be desirable to
 provide a strut capable of operating at increased operating
 pressures, to achieve a desired increased effective spring rate
 at the designed ride height that fits within existing space
 constraints. In addition, it would be desirable to provide a
 strut having an increased effective spring rate. For example,
 in some applications it may be desirable to provide a strut
 having an effective spring rate high enough so that the need
 for auxiliary roll resisting devices such as an anti-roll bar is
 not required to achieve the desired vehicle roll resistance
 and lateral stability. Furthermore, it would be desirable to
 provide an air strut that does not expand when subjected to
 a load.

In addition, vehicle suspensions are also used with mili-
 tary vehicles. Military vehicles are often used in dangerous
 environments and may be subjected to small arms fire,
 shrapnel from exploding devices, and other debris encoun-
 65 tered in harsh environments. Pneumatic air springs having a

flexible rubber membrane are vulnerable to suffering dam-
 age from small arms fire, shrapnel from explosions and
 miscellaneous debris encounter in harsh operating condi-
 tions. Furthermore, because the flexible rubber membrane
 expands when a load is applied, it is difficult to provide a
 protective layer of armor around the periphery of the flexible
 rubber membrane, although desirable. Thus, a pneumatic air
 spring that has a non-expandable outer shell is a better
 candidate for providing a protective layer of armor thereon.

SUMMARY

The present embodiments are directed to an air spring that
 may be used on a suspension of a military vehicle. The air
 spring may include an armored air cylinder float having a
 protective membrane positioned on an outer diameter of the
 air cylinder float. The protective membrane may be made of
 para-aramid synthetic fibers to provide protection to the air
 spring from small arms fire, shrapnel from exploding
 devices, and other debris. The protective membrane is
 designed and sized to dissipate energy and maintain opera-
 tion of the air spring. The air cylinder float may be con-
 structed of a material that does not expand as a load is
 applied allowing for a higher pressure air spring and the
 benefits associated therewith. Alternately, the protective
 membrane may be positioned over an air spring having an
 expandable rubber bladder.

In one aspect, an air spring assembly is providing includ-
 ing a damper having a first end and a second end, wherein
 the first end includes a first mount and the second end of the
 damper extends into an air cylinder float, the damper
 includes a housing defining a cavity, the damper having a
 rod positioned in the air cylinder float, the rod having a first
 end positioned within the cavity of the damper and a second
 end affixed to an end cap that is connected to a first end of
 the air cylinder float, a first piston affixed to the first end of
 the rod within the cavity of the damper, a second piston
 affixed to the damper, the second piston having one or more
 seals on an outer surface thereof that sealingly engage an
 inner surface of the air cylinder float, wherein when a load
 applied to the air spring assembly is increased, the second
 piston and the second end of the damper move towards the
 end cap compressing air within the air cylinder float,
 wherein as the load is increased the volume of air within the
 air cylinder float decreases resulting in an increased air
 pressure, wherein the air cylinder float is a solid member that
 does not expand as the air pressure within increases during
 compression, and wherein a protective membrane is posi-
 tioned on an outer diameter of the air cylinder float.

In another aspect, an air spring assembly is provided
 including a spring having an expandable rubber bladder,
 wherein when a load applied to the air spring is increased,
 the expandable rubber bladder expands, wherein a flexible
 protective membrane is positioned on an outer diameter of
 the expandable rubber bladder, and wherein when the
 expandable rubber bladder expands, the flexible protective
 member also expands.

In a further aspect, an air spring assembly is provided
 including an air cylinder float having an end cap, a rod
 positioned within the air cylinder float and secured to the end
 cap; a piston attached to the rod, wherein when a load
 applied to the air spring assembly is increased, the piston
 moves towards the end cap compressing air within the air
 cylinder float, wherein as the load is increased the volume of
 air within the air cylinder float decreases resulting in an
 increased air pressure, wherein the air cylinder float is a
 solid member that does not expand as the air pressure within

increases during compression, and wherein a protective membrane is positioned on an outer diameter of the air cylinder float.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Exemplary embodiments of the invention are described herein with reference to the drawings, wherein like parts are designated by like reference numerals, and wherein:

FIG. 1 is a front view of air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** installed on vehicle suspension **100**;

FIG. 2 is a front view of air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** shown installed on vehicle suspension **100** shown in FIG. 1 with protective membranes **52a** and **52b** positioned over air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b**;

FIG. 3 is a left side view of vehicle suspension **100** shown in FIG. 2 showing air spring assembly **50a** with protective membrane **52a**;

FIG. 4 is a top view of vehicle suspension **100** shown in FIGS. 2 and 3 showing air spring assembly **50a** with protective membrane **52a** and air spring assembly **50b** with protective membrane **52b**;

FIG. 5 is a top view of protective membrane **52a** shown in FIGS. 2-4;

FIG. 6 is an exploded view of an example air spring assembly **50** shown without a protective membrane or internal rod that may be used for air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** shown in FIGS. 1-4;

FIG. 7 is a cross-sectional view of air spring assembly **50** shown in FIGS. 1-4 in a fully extended state;

FIG. 8 is a front view of air spring **150** having protective membrane **162** positioned over expandable rubber bladder **160**; and

FIG. 9 is a front view of air spring **150** shown in FIG. 8 having protective membrane **162** over expandable rubber bladder **160** after the expandable rubber bladder **160** has been expanded.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

FIG. 1 is a front view of air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** installed on vehicle suspension **100**. Vehicle suspension **100** is an example vehicle suspension and air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** may be used in connection with vehicle suspensions having different configurations and geometry. Furthermore, air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** are example air spring assemblies may have different configurations or geometries than shown.

As noted above, vehicle suspensions, including vehicle suspension **100**, may be installed on military vehicles. Military vehicles often operate in harsh and dangerous environments where they may be subjected to small arms fire, shrapnel from explosive devices, and other debris. As a result, the air springs on the vehicle suspension may be vulnerable to damage in such an environment. As a result, the present embodiments advantageously provide an armored coating or protective membrane to protect the air springs from damages. FIG. 2 is a front view of air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** shown installed on vehicle suspension **100** shown in FIG. 1 with protective membranes **52a** and **52b** positioned over air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b**.

The protective membranes **52a** and **52b** may be constructed of para-aramid synthetic fibers, or other high strength material such as ballistic nylon. In some embodiments, poly-para-phenylene terephthalamide fibers may be used, such as those sold under the trademark KEVLAR®.

Further, the protective membranes **52a** and **52b** may be formed of a plurality of layers of such para-aramid synthetic fibers or ballistic nylon.

FIG. 3 is a left side view of vehicle suspension **100** shown in FIG. 2 showing air spring assembly **50a** with protective membrane **52a**. Protective membrane **52a** is positioned over the outer diameter of air spring assembly **50a** and in this embodiment extends a distance *h*, such that the entire height of the air spring assembly **50a** is covered by the protective membrane **52a**, however in other applications it may extend a greater or lesser distance. Furthermore, protective membrane **52a** advantageously includes an upper portion **53** of an upper surface of the protective membrane **52a** adapted to face an inner portion of a military vehicle is sloped to provide for a greater clearance between the protective membrane and vehicle suspension **100**.

FIG. 4 is a top view of vehicle suspension **100** shown in FIGS. 2 and 3 showing air spring assembly **50a** with protective membrane **52a** and air spring assembly **50b** with protective membrane **52b**. In this embodiment, protective membrane **52a** extends 360 degrees around the outer diameter of air spring assembly **50a** and protective membrane **52b** extends 360 degrees around the outer diameter of air spring assembly **52a**. In other embodiments, the protective membrane may not extend 360 degrees around the outer surface of the air spring assembly. For example, inner portions of the air spring assembly may not be covered with a protective membrane as they are less likely to be hit with small arms fire, shrapnel from explosions, or other debris than the more exposed outer portions of the air spring assembly.

Furthermore, protective membranes **52a** and **52b** may have a thickness of 0.5 to 0.75 inches, although in some applications a greater or lesser thickness may be used. In addition, in this embodiment of FIG. 4, protective membranes **52a** and **52b** include reduced thickness inner portions **54a** and **54b** respectively that may be on the order of $\frac{1}{8}''$ to $\frac{1}{4}''$ of an inch thick. In other embodiments the area of reduced thickness of inner portions **54a** and **54b** may have no protective coating as this area is less prone to being hit with small arms fire, shrapnel from explosions or other debris. The reduced thickness inner portions **54a** and **54b** also provide for greater clearance between the air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** and components of vehicle suspension **100**. The protective membranes **52a** and **52b** are sized and designed to protect air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** by dissipating energy of a projectile to prevent damages to air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** and allowing them to continue to operate properly.

FIG. 5 is a top view of protective membrane **52a** shown in FIGS. 2-4 removed from air spring assembly **50a**. Reduced thickness section **54a** is clearly shown. In this embodiment, there is an abrupt transition to the reduced thickness section **54a** although the transition could be gradual as well.

FIG. 6 is an exploded view of an example air spring assembly **50** shown without a protective membrane or internal rod that may be used for air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** shown in FIGS. 1-4. Other air springs configurations and geometries different from that shown in FIG. 6 may also be used for air spring assembly **50**. In FIG. 6, air spring assembly **50** includes an air cylinder float **60** that is a tubular member, and an end cap **110** having a first mount **94** with a through-hole **96** that may be used to mount the upper end of air spring assembly **50** to a vehicle using bar pin **102**. The end cap **110** may be threaded such that an end of the air cylinder float **60** may be threaded thereto. In a

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preferred embodiment an O-ring is positioned adjacent the threads to form a seal. Alternately, the end cap 110 could be welded to the air cylinder float 60. In FIG. 6, the other end of air spring assembly 50 includes a damper 70, although in other embodiments the air spring assembly 50 may not include a damper. In FIG. 6, the end of damper 70 includes a second mount 90 with a through-hole 92 that may be used to mount the lower end of air spring assembly 50 to a vehicle using bar pin 104. Attached to damper 70 is spring support 80 positioned on a piston. Positioned within air cylinder float 60 is primary coil spring 72 and tender or supplemental spring 64 with spring adaptor 68 positioned between primary coil spring 72 and tender or supplemental spring 64. Also included is a bump stop 62 positioned adjacent the end cap 110 which serves as stop when the end of damper 70 fully compresses springs 72 and 64.

In FIG. 6, the tender or supplemental spring 64 is shown positioned to abut spring support 80 and primary coil spring 72 is shown positioned to abut end cap 110 within air cylinder float 60. However, the positioning of primary coil spring 72 and tender or supplemental spring 64 may be reversed such that the tender or supplemental spring 64 abuts end cap 110 and the primary coil spring 72 abuts spring support 80 within air cylinder float 60. The tender or supplemental spring 64 is used to keep the primary coil spring 72 properly positioned upon rebound and to keep the primary coil spring 72 from being loose when the air spring assembly 50 is fully extended, although in some applications the tender or supplemental spring 64 may not be needed. Furthermore, in some applications the primary coil spring 72 may not be required and thus air spring assembly 50 may include no springs.

The air spring assembly 50 is advantageously designed to operate at higher service air pressures than a typical air spring cylinder having a flexible membrane, although it may also operate at lower service air pressures as well. When a load is applied to the air spring assembly 50, the spring support 80 attached to damper 70 moves longitudinally within air cylinder float 60 compressing the primary coil spring 72 and tender spring 64 and reducing the volume within the air cylinder float 60, and thereby increasing the pressure of the air inside the air cylinder float. As shown in FIG. 7, seals 81 and 83 are positioned on the outside surface of spring support 80 and are used to seal the air within the air cylinder float 60 as the air pressure increases. Similarly, the end cap 110 and air cylinder float 60 are sealed to prevent air from leaking and to maintain the air pressure within the air cylinder float 60. The air cylinder float 60 does not expand as the air pressure within increases. The air cylinder float 60 is made of a non-flexible material, preferably a metal which is able to withstand significantly increased air pressures within when compared to an air spring having a flexible membrane. In a preferred embodiment, the air cylinder float 60 is made of mild steel DOM tubing. In FIG. 7, a first piston 75a is attached to a first end of rod 75 within damper 70 and a second end of rod 75 is attached to end cap 110.

As noted above, in typical air springs with a flexible membrane, the operating pressures that may be utilized are limited due to the current limitations on flexible membrane and rubber construction. As a result, the typical normalized ride height operating pressure is limited to 80-100 psi, up to 120 psi, with maximum pressure at full compression at around 200 psi. However, with air spring assembly 50 having solid, non-expandable air cylinder float 60, significantly higher operating pressures may be used. For example, air spring assembly 50 can be arranged in a configuration to

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operate at ride height at 175-250 psi air pressure, with a peak air pressure of 1000 psi air pressure or higher. Other example configurations of air spring assembly 50 with different ride heights, operating air pressures at ride height, and peak air pressures are also possible, including air pressures well in excess of 1000 psi.

The effective spring rate of an air cylinder that also includes a coil spring is a function of the spring rate of the coil spring and the pressure of the air within the air cylinder float 60. As used herein, the effective spring rate refers to the combined spring rate of the coil spring (if used) and air pressure within the air cylinder float 60. By increasing the effective spring rate of the strut, through, e.g., higher air pressures in the air cylinder float 60 and/or the addition of fluid in the air cylinder float to reduce the volume of the air in the air cylinder float, the vehicle may achieve a higher ride frequency, and increased roll performance and lateral stability performance. Therefore, air spring assembly 50 is able to provide an increased effective spring rate because of its ability to operate at higher service air pressures. In particular, the effective spring rate of the strut at the designed ride height is high enough that the need for auxiliary anti-roll devices may be eliminated.

In a preferred embodiment of the air spring assembly 50 shown, the effective spring rate at the designed ride height may be 1500 to 2000 pounds/inch. The designed ride height is typically defined as the distance between the wheel center and the underside of the chassis frame. It could also be the distance between a point on the suspension system (unsprung mass) and a point on the body (sprung mass) such as the distance between mounting points on a suspension spring or strut. On typical air suspension systems it is desirable that this ride height should remain constant regardless of body mass or payload therefore the vehicle height and 'design ride height' would remain constant whether the vehicle was loaded to curb weight or at its' maximum Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) loading. Maintaining this ride height can provide benefits such as maintaining vehicle height, ground clearance, roll center height position, driveline angles and providing consistent stability and handling properties.

Maintaining the system design ride height is typically managed by a 'height control sensor' that will react to changes in ride height by either introducing more air into the air springs/struts or allowing air to be exhausted from the air springs/struts. These air management systems can be tuned in terms of responsiveness to react to in-service dynamic changes to ride height position when traversing uneven terrain. These systems may also be programmed (or manually adjusted) to provide 'self-leveling' features such that the ride height at left wheels vs. right wheels or front wheels vs. rear wheels can be adjusted to reduce or maintain body angles on grades or side slopes. The designed ride height correlates to the amount the air spring assembly 50 is compressed at expected operating vehicle weights. Therefore, as used herein, the term "designed ride height" refers to the distance the air spring assembly is compressed. Therefore, a designed ride height of 4 inches refers to the air spring assembly 50 being compressed 4 inches at expected operating vehicle weights.

With the air spring assembly 50 having such a high effective spring rate at the designed ride height, the need for auxiliary roll resisting devices such as an anti-roll bar may not be required to achieve the desired vehicle roll resistance and lateral stability. In addition, in order for an air spring with a flexible membrane to achieve such a high effective spring rate, the air spring would be required to have a

significantly increased diameter to achieve the effective spring rate at the designed ride height. For example, in a preferred embodiment of the air spring assembly **50** having a 9 inch distance of compression, the diameter of the air cylinder float is 7.375 inches with a wall thickness of $\frac{3}{16}$ ths of an inch. In a conventional air spring with a flexible membrane, with typical operating vehicle air pressures of 80-110 psi, with the same 9 inch distance of compression, the diameter would need to be 10.1 inches in the fully extended state, and 11.5 inches in the fully compressed state. However, to achieve the same effective spring rate at the designed ride height as air spring assembly **50**, the air spring with flexible membrane would need to be even larger, with a larger volume or air and/or larger coil spring. In many applications there simply is not enough space to accommodate an air spring having a flexible membrane, even when an included primary coil spring is used, because it is required to have such a larger diameter on the order of at least 33 to 50 percent larger than air spring assembly **50**. As a result, there are many applications where the use of air spring assembly **50**, with a solid, non-expandable air cylinder float **60**, is advantageous, particularly on vehicles where there is limited space to position the air spring assembly.

In the preferred embodiment of cylinder shock assembly **50** shown in FIGS. **6** and **7**, as noted above, the spring support **80** which is positioned on a piston may travel 0-9 inches longitudinally within the air cylinder float **60**. The bump stop **62** is preferably comprised of UHMWPE, also known as ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene. Similarly, spring adaptor **68** is also preferably comprised of UHMWPE. Spring support **80** is preferably comprised of **6061-T6** aluminum alloy, as are end cap **110** and upper mount **94** and lower mount **90**. The damper **70** is comprised of various steel components as is conventional in the art. Preferably, damper **70** is filled with a fluid, such as a hydraulic fluid, although the cavity the damper may be filled with an air such that damper **70** is an air damper.

FIG. **8** is a front view of air spring **150** having protective membrane **162** positioned over expandable rubber bladder **160**. Air spring **150** may be used for air spring assemblies **50a** and **50b** shown in FIGS. **1-4**. In the embodiment of FIG. **8**, the protective membrane **162** is designed to allow for expansion of the expandable rubber bladder **160**. Thus, protective membrane **162** may comprise a flexible layer of para-aramid synthetic fibers or other high strength material such as ballistic nylon. In some embodiments, poly-paraphenylene terephthalamide fibers may be used, such as those sold under the trademark KEVLAR®. Further, the protective membrane **162** may be formed of a plurality of layers of such para-aramid synthetic fibers or ballistic nylon.

In the embodiment of FIG. **8**, the protective membrane **162** includes longitudinally extending edges **166a** and **166b** shown with a gap **d1** therebetween. In other embodiments, the longitudinally extending edges **166a** and **166b** may be overlapping. Retention straps **164a** and **164b** are shown extending over longitudinally extending edges **166a** and **166b** and gap **d1** to retain the protective membrane in position. Retention straps **164a** and **164b** may be flexible and/or elastic to allow for expansion of expandable rubber bladder **160**.

FIG. **9** is a front view of air spring **150** shown in FIG. **8** having protective membrane **162** over expandable rubber bladder **160** after the expandable rubber bladder **160** has been expanded when a load has been applied. As shown in FIG. **9**, after expansion of expandable rubber bladder **160**, longitudinally extending edges **166a** and **166b** have been separated from each other as shown with a gap **d2** therebe-

tween. In other embodiments, the longitudinally extending edges **166a** and **166b** may continue to be overlapping after the expansion of expandable rubber bladder **160**. Retention straps **164a** and **164b** are shown extending over longitudinally extending edges **166a** and **166b** and gap **d2** to retain the protective membrane in position even after expandable rubber bladder has been expanded. Retention straps **164a** and **164b** may be flexible and/or elastic to allow for expansion of expandable rubber bladder **160**.

As with the protective membranes **52a** and **52b** shown in FIGS. **2-4**, protective membrane **162** shown in FIGS. **8** and **9** is sized and designed to protect air spring assembly **150** by dissipating energy of a projectile to prevent damages to air spring assembly **150** and allowing it to continue to operate properly. The thickness of the protective member **162** may be 0.5 to 0.75 inches thick, although greater or lesser thicknesses may also be used.

Example embodiments of the present embodiments have been described above. Those skilled in the art will understand that changes and modifications may be made to the described embodiments without departing from the true scope and spirit of the present invention, which is defined by the claims.

We claim:

1. An air spring assembly, comprising:

a damper having a first end and a second end, wherein the first end includes a first mount and the second end of the damper extends into an air cylinder float;

the damper includes a housing defining a cavity, the damper having a rod positioned in the air cylinder float, the rod having a first end positioned within the cavity of the damper and a second end affixed to an end cap that is connected to a first end of the air cylinder float; a first piston affixed to the first end of the rod within the cavity of the damper;

a second piston affixed to the damper; the second piston having one or more seals on an outer surface thereof that sealingly engage an inner surface of the air cylinder float;

wherein when a load applied to the air spring assembly is increased, the second piston and the second end of the damper move towards the end cap compressing air within the air cylinder float;

wherein as the load is increased the volume of air within the air cylinder float decreases resulting in an increased air pressure;

wherein the air cylinder float is a solid member that does not expand as the air pressure within increases during compression;

wherein a protective membrane is positioned on an outer diameter of the air cylinder float; and

wherein a second portion of the protective member has a thickness less than a thickness of a first portion of the protective membrane.

2. The air spring assembly of claim **1**, wherein at a designed vehicle ride height the air pressure within the air cylinder float is between 175 and 250 psi inclusive.

3. The air spring assembly of claim **1**, further including a primary coil spring positioned within the air cylinder float.

4. The air spring assembly of claim **3**, further including a tender spring positioned within the air cylinder float in series with the primary coil spring.

5. The air spring assembly of claim **1**, wherein the protective member extends 360 degrees around the outer diameter of the air cylinder float.

6. The air spring assembly of claim 1, wherein the first portion of the protective membrane has a thickness of between 0.5 inches to 0.75 inches inclusive.

7. The air spring assembly of claim 1, wherein the thickness of the second portion of the protective portion is $\frac{1}{8}^{th}$ of an inch.

8. The air spring assembly of claim 5, wherein the protective membrane covers the entire outer diameter of the air cylinder float.

9. The air spring assembly of claim 1, wherein the protective membrane comprises a plurality of layers of para-aramid fibers.

10. The air spring assembly of claim 9, wherein the para-aramid synthetic fibers comprise poly-para-phenylene terephthalamide.

11. The air spring of claim 1, wherein the outer diameter of the air cylinder float is 6 inches.

12. The air spring assembly of claim 1, wherein the outer diameter of the air cylinder float is equal to an inner diameter of the protective membrane.

13. The air spring assembly of claim 1, wherein the protective membrane has a height of between 19 and 21 inches inclusive.

14. An air spring assembly, comprising:

a damper having a first end and a second end, wherein the first end includes a first mount and the second end of the damper extends into an air cylinder float;

the damper includes a housing defining a cavity, the damper having a rod positioned in the air cylinder float, the rod having a first end positioned within the cavity of the damper and a second end affixed to an end cap that is connected to a first end of the air cylinder float; a first piston affixed to the first end of the rod within the cavity of the damper,

a second piston affixed to the damper, the second piston having one or more seals on an outer surface thereof that sealingly engage an inner surface of the air cylinder float;

wherein when a load applied to the air spring assembly is increased, the second piston and the second end of the damper move towards the end cap compressing air within the air cylinder float;

wherein as the load is increased the volume of air within the air cylinder float decreases resulting in an increased air pressure;

wherein the air cylinder float is a solid member that does not expand as the air pressure within increases during compression; and

wherein a protective membrane is positioned on an outer diameter of the air cylinder float; and

wherein an upper portion of an upper surface of the protective membrane adapted to face an inner portion of a military vehicle is sloped to provide for a greater clearance between the protective membrane and a suspension of the military vehicle.

15. An air spring assembly, comprising:

a spring having an expandable rubber bladder wherein when a load applied to the air spring is increased, the expandable rubber bladder expands;

wherein a flexible protective membrane is positioned on an outer diameter of the expandable rubber bladder; wherein when the expandable rubber bladder expands, the flexible protective member also expands; wherein the flexible protective member has first and second edges that extend longitudinally along the air cylinder float; and

a distance between the first and second edges changes when expandable rubber bladder expands.

16. The air spring assembly of claim 15, wherein flexible straps are used to connect the first and second edges.

17. The air spring assembly of claim 15, wherein the first and second edges overlap prior to expansion of the expandable rubber bladder.

18. The air spring assembly of claim 15, wherein the protective membrane comprises a plurality of layers of para-aramid fibers.

19. The air spring assembly of claim 18, wherein the para-aramid synthetic fibers comprise poly-para-phenylene terephthalamide.

20. An air spring assembly, comprising:

an air cylinder float having an end cap;

a rod positioned within the air cylinder float and secured to the end cap;

a piston attached to the rod;

wherein when a load applied to the air spring assembly is increased, the piston moves towards the end cap compressing air within the air cylinder float;

wherein as the load is increased the volume of air within the air cylinder float decreases resulting in an increased air pressure;

wherein the air cylinder float is a solid member that does not expand as the air pressure within increases during compression;

wherein a protective membrane is positioned on an outer diameter of the air cylinder float; and

wherein a second portion of the protective member has a thickness less than a thickness of a first portion of the protective membrane.

21. The air spring assembly of claim 20, wherein at a designed vehicle ride height the air pressure within the air cylinder float is between 175 and 250 psi inclusive.

22. The air spring assembly of claim 20, wherein the first portion of the protective membrane has a thickness of between 0.5 inches to 0.75 inches inclusive.

23. The air spring assembly of claim 20, wherein the protective membrane comprises a plurality of layers of para-aramid fibers.

24. The air spring assembly of claim 20, wherein the para-aramid synthetic fibers comprise poly-para-phenylene terephthalamide.